



W. Regell file

THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

Dr. Richard Lyman
President
The Rockefeller Foundation
1133 Avenue of the Americas
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Dear Dick:

I have been attending to the task that you mentioned as a way of being able to be of some first help to you; namely to identify candidates for your vice president. I was beginning to wonder at my own lack of imagination in fetching the ideal personality when two names came to my attention that, very likely, deserve your serious consideration.

Seymour Cohen is an eminent figure in the history of molecular biology, having been involved (perhaps even prematurely) in a straightforward chemical analysis of the structure and functioning of nucleic acids. I will be quite surprised if your roster of potential candidates includes many, or even any, of comparable proven performance in experimental science. If I could say that he had come through many battles (and sometimes being ignored) without scars, I might find it hard to imagine anyone more superbly equipped to work with you. He has a strong philosophical bent. He has been on the right side of many controversies, more often than not. He has had substantial academic administrative experience as the chairman of a successful department. He has an undoubted dedication to doing both good science, and good works therewith, and a great deal of insight about particular ways to do it. It is possible that his interactions with me are a bit more defensive and rigid-minded than they may be with some others; and if so that should attenuate even the minor reservations that I would have to mention before recommending him to a good friend like yourself. He is, however, a very strong-minded individual indeed and while you are scarcely looking for someone who can suffer fools gladly it is just possible that he carries the alternative to a fault. However, this is a matter that I believe you would have no difficulty in sounding through

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your personal conversations with him; and I really do urge that you give his candidacy the most serious consideration. If an actual working knowledge of how science is done, and can be done, for human benefit is of material importance in filling this position, that might well be an overriding consideration in his favor. There is certainly no one on the present staff of the Foundation nor, as I indicated, really very likely to be applying, who could be his match in this respect. I would be more than happy to go further into any detail that you might wish.

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This was all the letter that I had intended to write; but I received something in this morning's mail that might just succeed in delivering a dark horse of superb caliber to you. His name is Wilfred Razzell and I knew him quite intimately between 1961 and 1964 when he was one of the principals at the Syntex Institute for Molecular Biology, which Carl Djerassi and I helped to organize. I was very sorry when he left to take a more conventional academic position at the University of British Columbia -- you will see his further history in the enclosed C.V. I would have been very pleased to have been able to recruit him into my own department at Stanford at that time, but the possibility of returning to Canada was then a major consideration for him. He decided in 1971 to move to a somewhat more practically oriented line of research, namely in fisheries directing the Vancouver Laboratory of the Canadian Department of Environment. I do not have a more up-to-date C.V. but did have some continued correspondence with him that supported my continued high regard.

Most recently he moved to Suva, Fiji to establish a comparable agency for the South Pacific Forum; but he is just now on the point of being displaced by a native islander and he just wrote me to tell me that he was looking for a new position. He is concentrating his own efforts on Australia at the moment.

Bill according to my recollection has an extraordinary combination of scientific acuity and human sensitivity. He has excellent training and experience in fundamental molecular biology and enzymology but has gone from there to very much broader perspectives. I don't think you even need waste your time consulting with Gunsalus or Khorana about his very strong scientific background. If you are interested further I could try and smoke out some other more recent monitors of his per-

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formance in other roles -- the person I would probably look to would be Bill Gibson at the University of British Columbia. Carl Djerassi may also have tracked him and I'm sure will have important recollections from over 15 years ago. There is a large element of hunch in this one, but Razzell is of course much younger than Cohen which I am sure is an advantage. I think he does have in fact a broader international background of experience. While not having reached Cohen's critical eminence, he is unquestionably an absolutely first rate scientist and I think is so regarded. The C.V.'s I have are a little bit dated but as I indicated I will indeed try to dig out more if you wish.

Yours sincerely,



Joshua Lederberg

Encls.